

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, ranking members Miner and France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Carmel Kosztolitz, and I am from Cheshire, CT. I am a volunteer with Ct. Against Gun Violence and have been actively involved with CAGV for several years.

I am testifying in support of the \$3.6 million included in the Governor's budget adjustment bill for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence prevention programs. This funding is imperative if we want to finally reduce the tragic impact of gun violence in urban, high-violence communities of Ct. Evidence-based prevention and intervention programs aimed at individuals at high risk of perpetrating or being victims of gun violence are [demonstrated](#) to reduce shootings and killings in high-violence communities. There's an urgent need to take action: on average, someone in CT is murdered with a gun once every three days.

I have worked for many years with people suffering from chronic mental illness. Mental illness is not a cause for gun violence, as many people mistakenly believe. The fact is people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of gun violence than perpetrators of violence.

With more funding allocated for community gun violence prevention programs, we can educate law enforcement officers and mental health professionals to prevent situations that involve gun violence and people with mental illness.

The state needs to invest more in community-based prevention and intervention solutions; it has ample resources to do so. According to the [CT Mirror](#), Connecticut has a projected budget surplus of more than \$2 billion. If the state can afford more than \$300 million in tax cuts, as [proposed](#) by the Governor, it can afford to invest more than \$3.6 million spread over two years from federal pandemic relief.

While I commend the Governor for proposing \$3.6 million to fund community gun violence prevention programs, I urge the legislature to do more. We must treat the gun violence epidemic in Ct. as a Public Health emergency, and create an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the Department of Public Health to prevent further loss of life.

Thank you very much for hearing my testimony today.
Sincerely,

Carmel Kosztolitz
Cheshire, CT